



# Turning data into smiles

Rehosting saves millions and improves citizen services

Customer success story



“Our business case showed an ROI for rehosting in a little more than five years. That’s rarely heard of in state government.”

– Mark Allen | CIO, Mississippi Department of Human Services



### Customer Profile

The Mississippi Department of Human Services serves one in four of the state’s 3 million citizens through public-assistance programs, social services and support for children, low-income individuals and families.

### New challenges

- Modernize systems to optimize services
- Invest smartly in IT to save funds for social programs
- Build on the stability of proven core systems
- Be equipped to leverage new innovations
- Adapt to changing federal regulations

### Solutions at work

- Application modernization
- System integration led by Cambria Solutions with Software AG Professional Services
- Integration & APIs

### Key benefits

- Millions saved by rehosting vs. replacing systems
- Five core systems rehosted in four days following 18-month planning period
- Instant access to data, 24/7
- More efficient delivery of citizen services
- Stage set for new technologies, such as artificial intelligence

## “Life changers” need the best data

There’s nothing more gratifying than a smile—a smile when a child is no longer hungry, a father gets workforce training and finds a job, or a family reaches self-sufficiency. Multiplying those smiles in a massive way is the purpose of the Mississippi Department of Human Services. The agency exists to serve the state’s citizens in their time of need. That could mean providing a family short-term financial help, making sure children get nutrition, helping a person reach self-sufficiency, or assuring an aging person can live with dignity. The people who staff the department are “life changers,” says Executive Director John Davis. The systems that empower them are “life critical,” explained CIO Mark Allen. Those systems process, for example, \$360+ million in child support and \$1 billion in nutritional aid a year.

Built with Adabas & Natural over 25 years ago, these sturdy systems are reliable in processing data for welfare, economic assistance, payments tracking and other social programs. However, since these systems were mainframe-based, case workers couldn’t easily access the latest data or build new innovations. “We used to process data using batch overnight,” explained Project Manager Cheryl Joiner. “That could take up to 14 hours to complete even one process. Since rehosting to Linux®, access to data is instantaneous. Being on an open environment, we can take advantage of web services and APIs for integration. So, rather than waiting overnight, our clients see immediate results.”

## Setting a new state benchmark

Rehosting—rather than replacing systems that work—seemed responsible and sensible to CIO Allen. He’d heard horror stories of agencies “ripping and replacing” systems in his role as representative to the American Public Human Services Association IT Solutions Management Group.

“One state spent \$440 million to replace a child support system, another \$600 million for a SNAP/TANF—and that’s just for one system,” Allen said. “We had five systems to update. For us, replacement was not an option.”

He added: “Because our core systems were stable, I looked at staying with what we had from a back-end perspective. Some states have tried to keep their code the same on the front-end and change it on the back-end. But my team already knew Natural ... if we stayed with Natural, we could avoid millions in system replacement costs and also the cost of retraining.”

## Smart move, smiles all around

After 18 months of careful planning and delivery, the department made a recordsetting rehosting to Linux—five systems moved in four days with no unplanned downtime.

“Moving one system is tough enough,” Allen explained. “Moving five systems at once is pretty aggressive. I knew this was a career-maker or -breaker. Turns out, completing the migration without any issues in a tight timeframe is one of the proudest moments of my career.” Making the move increased productivity, since staff can access the latest client information faster. Other benefits included reduced costs for operations and maintenance as well as more agile IT, better equipped to respond quickly to business changes.

### 3 keys to success

Allen shared these best practices for rehosting:

#### 1. Find good project managers.

For Allen, on the state side (MDHS), it was Cheryl Joiner.

On the vendor side (Cambria), it was Tony Franklin. These skilled and astute PMs worked seamlessly together.

#### 2. Find the right systems integrator.

For Allen, that partner was Cambria Solutions—teaming with Software AG Professional Services.

#### 3. Open communication.

Allen's team has been going through a lean-agile transformation. In the last six months of the project, Cambria led daily stand-ups around a Kanban board. This practice worked so well that now other departments inside and outside of IT are using it.



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## Reuse, reduce, rehost

Other states are now following Mississippi's lead. "They also need to move to an open-source-type system— and, like us, they can't spend tens upon millions of dollars doing a new system," Allen said.

By rehosting, Allen's team not only reused valuable business logic but they reduced modernization costs drastically—two compelling reasons not to replace. And now on an open system, the department is primed to bolt on new technologies to address future needs.

In the second phase of its modernization, the department has worked with Cambria to take advantage of the new open systems environment to harness new technologies. The department has become an innovation hub, adding modern interfaces that streamline casework, as well as using managed file transfer to accelerate and secure data exchange internally and with partners. In addition, the department implemented a shared application intake with their Medicaid partners, developed new application technologies, is setting up their first real-time web services, and deploying chatbot technology.

Allen recommends other states consider this incremental two-step modernization as an attractive alternative to the traditional "rip and replace" as it provided value to children and families in a less risky approach. Added Joiner: "We're doing all of this to improve our processes ... helping the citizens of the State of Mississippi—that's the bottom line!"

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